

## **EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION 9**

### **SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR)**

**ISC Function:** Operations

**LEAD:** Island County Sheriff (ICSO)  
Municipal Law Enforcement

**SUPPORT:** Department of Emergency Management (DEM)  
Fire Departments and Fire Protection Districts  
Island Communications (ICOM 911)  
County Volunteer Organizations

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. Purpose**

Provide for the effective utilization of search and rescue resources and the control and coordination of various types of search and rescue operations.

**B. Scope**

1. This Emergency Support Function (ESF) addresses wilderness and urban search and rescue operations, and includes search and rescue on the ground, from the air, or in the water occurring separately or coincidentally with a significant natural or technological disaster.
2. This ESF does not apply to searches conducted by law enforcement related to criminal apprehension and arrest.
3. This ESF does not address search and rescue operations typically conducted by fire services such as search and rescue within a burning building or entrapped in vehicles at an automobile accident.

#### **II. RELATED POLICIES**

**A. Search and Rescue (SAR) means:**

The act of searching for, rescuing or recovering by means of ground, marine, or air activity any person who becomes lost, injured, or is killed while outdoors or as a result of a natural or

man made disaster, including instances involving searches for downed aircraft when ground personnel are used. (*RCW 38.52.010[7]*)

- B.** In accordance with RCW 38.52.400(1), the chief law enforcement officers of each political subdivision within the county shall be responsible for SAR activities within their jurisdiction. Search and rescue operations will use the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) and will follow procedures and responsibilities outlined in the CEMP Basic Plan and this and related emergency support functions.
1. Search operations are normally an extension of a missing person report and are normally initiated and commanded by law enforcement personnel. Other jurisdictions and disciplines may be asked to contribute resources and equipment to a search operation.
  2. Rescue operations are by nature an extension of emergency medical services (EMS) in that persons requiring rescue often require medical attention either due to their condition or to a preexisting medical condition. Fire service personnel generally provide initial EMS beyond basic first aid. The fire services are also generally equipped and trained for basic rescue as an extension of removing injured persons from buildings, vehicles, or other technical entrapment situations.
  3. Initial incident command of a SAR operation will be established in accordance with ICS doctrine. A transfer of incident command due to a change in the technical mission, that is, from search to rescue will be at the discretion of the IC based on the existing situation.
- C.** The United States Coast Guard (USCG) directs all SAR operations on or above navigable waters (waters where the USCG maintains navigational aides or where there is commercial shipping or navigation). Initial response may be undertaken by local jurisdictions based on urgency, location, and equipment availability. Incident command will be properly transferred to the USCG as the situation dictates.
- D.** The Washington State Emergency Management Division (EMD) will issue SAR mission numbers to local authorities in response to a downed or missing aircraft for ground search only, and will coordinate these missions with the Department of Transportation, Division of Aeronautics.

### **III. SITUATION**

#### **A. Emergency/Disaster Conditions and Hazards**

1. Island County is vulnerable to the effects of flooding, extreme wind and storm, earthquake damage, landslide, and the possible effects of volcanic eruption. These hazards could cause damage and injury such that people may be trapped in structures or vehicles or stranded by high water.
2. Island County contains areas of high steep bluffs and isolated beaches where people can become trapped by the unstable ground, height above ground, or rising tides.
3. Finally, persons with mental or emotional conditions and children can and do wander into woods and underbrush and become disoriented, lost, and require location and recovery.

#### **B. Planning Assumptions**

1. Law enforcement will generally assume incident command (IC) of a search operation in Island County. Upon arrival, the USCG will formally assume search or rescue incident command in the waters surrounding Island County.
2. Land and near shore rescue operations will normally be conducted by fire services based on the skills and equipment required.
3. U.S. Navy SAR resources responding to an Island County SAR operation will take their direction from the SAR IC but will be responsible for their own mission assessment, tactics, and safety evaluation – while coordinating with local authorities.
4. Search or rescue operations that evolve into human remains recovery will be a law enforcement operation coordinated with the Island County Coroner.

### **IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

#### **A. General**

1. The chief law enforcement officers of each political subdivision within the county shall be responsible for SAR activities within their jurisdiction (RCW 38.52.400[1]). The Island County Sheriff is responsible for SAR operations in unincorporated Island County.

2. The respective law enforcement officer or the Sheriff's designated SAR IC will request search and rescue resources through ICOM dispatch. The requesting officer will be the IC until command is properly transferred.
3. The SAR IC or the Island County DEM, upon request from the SAR IC, will obtain a SAR mission number from the State EMD duty officer (1-800-258-5990). Coordination from the incident scene or from the local EOC to the State EOC will be through normal telephone and radio systems.
4. DEM will register emergency workers to assist with the SAR mission. These assets may include scent and tracking dog teams and local amateur radio operators. Any use of volunteers will require a mission number from the EMD Duty Officer. Information related to the proper use of volunteers is contained in Support Annex G.
5. County resources may not be sufficient to provide all the required equipment or manpower. The SAR IC or DEM acting on the IC's request may ask for additional SAR resources through the EMD Duty Officer.

**B. Communications**

1. ICOM will initially assign radio channels (frequencies) for a SAR operation.
2. A statewide dedicated radio frequency (155.160 MHZ) is available for search and rescue operations and may be used by Island County as operations dictate.
3. Island County DEM may request communications support from local amateur radio operators registered as emergency workers (ARES/RACES).

**C. Water SAR**

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) directs all SAR operations on or above navigable waters. Upon notification of a possible boating accident or possible drowning, ICOM 911 will initially notify:

1. Appropriate law enforcement agency that may respond if appropriate equipment and trained personnel are available.

2. Nearest fire service having a marine response unit.
3. EMS as appropriate.
4. USCG - if incident is in navigable salt water.
5. For responder safety, local marine rescue assets should only respond if the incident type, incident location, and weather are within their equipment capabilities and level of training. That decision is the responsibility of the leader of the designated SAR resource.

**D. Downed or Missing Aircraft**

1. Upon notification of the possibility of a downed aircraft in Island County, ICOM 911 will notify the ICSO and DEM. ICSO will:
  - a. Establish incident command, task DEM for a SAR mission number, and request local SAR trained volunteers to respond.
  - b. As situation develops, request other SAR or emergency response resources. Expand the incident command structure as necessary.
2. Notification of a downed or missing aircraft when received from within Island County should be reported to the EMD Duty Officer who will notify the Washington State Department of Transportation, Aviation Division and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

**E. Island County Emergency Operations Center (EOC)**

1. The Island County EOC is not normally opened or staffed for SAR operations. However, if the operation is unusually large or complex, DEM will open and staff the EOC to the appropriate level.
2. The EOC when opened will serve as a resource coordination point for the SAR IC. The EOC may also establish a Joint Information Center (JIC) to support the SAR IC.

3. If opened, the EOC will become the interface between the SAR IC, the Island County staff, other jurisdictions, and the EMD Duty Officer.

**F. Safety**

1. Emergency responder safety is the first priority in both search and rescue/recovery operations. SAR IC's must quickly establish safety rules based on local conditions and mission hazards. As soon as resources permit, the IC should appoint a safety officer for the incident.
2. Personnel participating in a SAR operation will not participate in tasks that exceed their training or equipment capabilities as determined by the resource leader.
3. Volunteer emergency workers participating in a SAR operation will be used only after a state SAR mission number is obtained. Volunteer emergency workers will not be used in any situation exceeding their training levels and equipment. State code prohibits the use of volunteer emergency workers in searches where firearms or other weapons may be involved.

**V. RESPONSIBILITIES**

**A. Local**

1. Island County Sheriff
  - a. Provides SAR incident command as required by each incident.
  - b. In cooperation with other emergency response organizations, identifies SAR equipment requirements, personnel training needs and other supplies to support SAR operations.
  - c. Provide SAR coordination and SAR resources to other county jurisdictions as requested.
2. Local Law Enforcement
  - a. Provides SAR incident command within their jurisdiction as required by each incident.

- b. Secure SAR mission numbers from state EMD or coordinates with Island County DEM for a SAR mission number.
  - c. Coordinates local resources including volunteers or requests volunteer support from the Island County DEM.
- 3. Department of Emergency Management
  - a. As requested by SAR IC, obtains SAR mission number from EMD Duty Officer.
  - b. Maintains a database list of registered emergency worker volunteers, their training and SAR qualifications. Registers temporary volunteers involved in a search and rescue operation. Activates emergency worker volunteers as requested by the SAR IC.
  - c. As required by the incident, requests additional SAR resources by contacting the EMD Duty Officer.
  - d. Maintains SAR volunteer participation records and forwards appropriate reimbursement requests and claims to EMD when the SAR mission is completed.
- 4. Fire Services
  - a. Fire services conduct rescue operations, commensurate with the training and availability of appropriate equipment.
  - b. Assist with lost person searches when resources are available.
  - c. Provide medical aid and medical transport.
  - d. Provide technical rescue support commensurate with training and equipment.
  - e. Provide incident command and staff for rescue operations or searches when requested.

5. Other Island County Emergency Response Organizations support SAR operations within the scope of available training and equipment.

**B. State EMD**

1. Coordinate state and regional SAR resources when requested by local SAR IC and when county resources are exhausted or not trained or equipped to the level of the incident.
2. Request federal (U.S. Navy) assistance when requirements dictate.

**C. Federal - Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

1. Tasks federal agencies to perform SAR activities under a Declaration of Emergency or Major Disaster Declaration by the President.
2. Coordinates with Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC)
3. Coordinates federal resources providing SAR assistance to states during non-disaster times (reference *National Search and Rescue Plan*).

**VI. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS**

Will be determined by the incident commander

**VII. REFERENCES**

- A.** RCW 38.52.400, Search and Rescue Activities, Powers and Duties of Local Officials
- B.** RCW 38.52.410, Search and Rescue Activities, Distribution of Funds for Compensation and Reimbursement of Volunteers
- C.** WAC 118.04.120, Classes and Qualifications of Search and Rescue Emergency Workers
- D.** WAC 118.04.240k, Mission Numbers, Requests and Requirements
- E.** WAC 468-200, Emergency Air Operations Search and Rescue/Disaster relief
- F.** Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), ESF 9 Search and Rescue



**G.** Island County CEMP, References

**IX. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

See Island County CEMP Basic Plan and References, Definitions and Acronyms

**TABS**

TAB A Standard Building Search and Rescue Structure Marking Instruction

## TAB A      Standard Search and Rescue Structure Marking Instruction

The following pattern and information will be used in Island County to indicate by whom and when a building has been searched and cleared by uniformed first responders or volunteer CERT teams.

